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AVIAN HAVEN





Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center



Some of our Guests
Winter-Spring 2011-2012

In this Issue

Starts on Slide

Herring Gull		3
Mallard		20
Wild Turkey		32
Bald Eagle		59

Photos by Glori Berry unless
otherwise credited
(DW = Diane Winn)

Case # 2011-1269



Herring Gull

Admitted Nov. 30, 2011

Species Profile

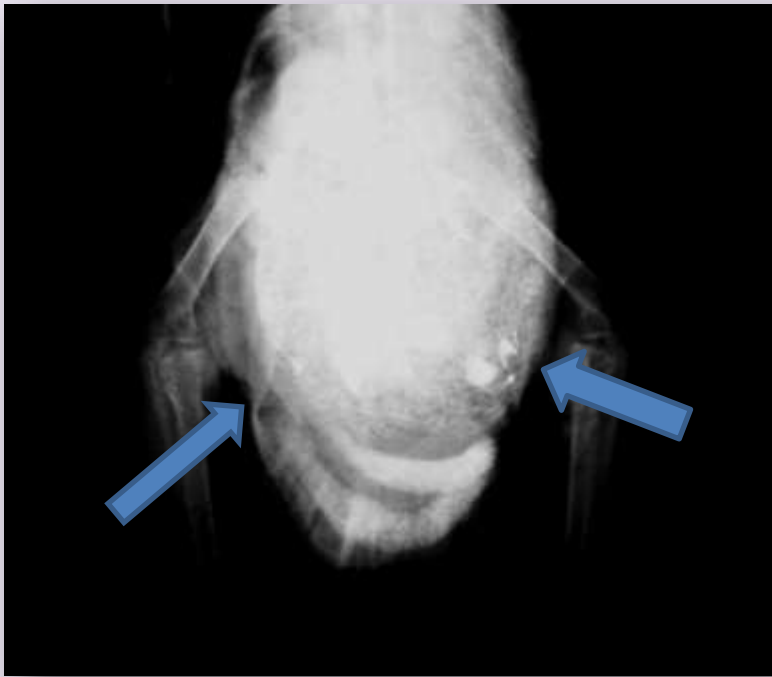
Herring Gulls are probably the most common and most familiar gull species in the Northeast. They are found year-round in Maine, inland as well as along the coast. Their foods include fish and insects, but these gulls are opportunistic scavengers that also take various human foods in parking lots and in garbage. Nests may be made on sand, rocks, or among plants; also on rooftops of buildings near water.

Adults have a white head, neck and body; the head and sides may be streaked with grayish-brown in the winter. The back and wings are light gray; wingtips are black with white spots. The bill is light orange with a red spot on the bottom part of the bill. Legs are pink. Adult appearance is attained in the 4th year; younger birds are more mottled, with less distinctive areas of white.

Case Notes and History

This individual was reported unable to fly in West Rockport on Nov. 30. Volunteer Caron Leichtman easily captured the bird. There were no apparent injuries, but the right shoulder felt "funny." Shelley wondered if there might be a clavicle fracture, and decided to keep him inside for a few days. These photos were taken on Dec. 2.

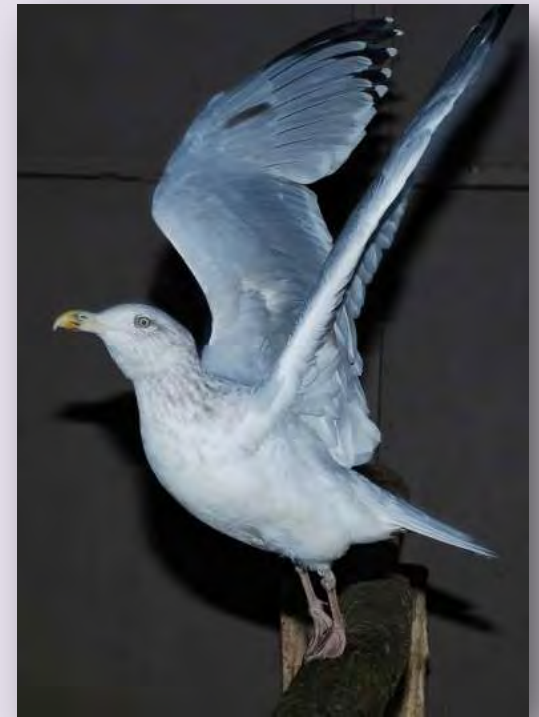




An x-ray taken on Dec. 4 revealed that Shelley's suspicion about the shoulder injury was correct. But in addition to the fractured clavicle, there were some unexplained densities in the gizzard and intestines. The bird soon became restless inside, so we moved him to an outdoor cage with only low perches.

On Dec. 12, it was time to allow him opportunities to fly. We moved him and another Herring Gull (admitted Nov. 22 with a wing fracture) to a larger outdoor cage, and in the process, noticed that he felt thin. A detour between the two cages was made so that we could record his weight. Two days later, we checked weight again, and took another x-ray. He had gained weight, but the stomach area still looked very dense.

On Dec. 16, he seems to be doing well in the outside cage; several photos were taken that day. His wings have good extension, and he is starting to fly.





The next day (Dec. 17) when we checked his weight, we discovered that he had lost 100 grams in just three days. A fecal exam revealed several kinds of parasites, which we treated. If parasites were the cause of the weight loss, weight should rebound soon. But on Dec. 19, he had lost another 50 grams.



Clearly something else was amiss. Another x-ray revealed the continuing presence of the mysterious densities in the stomach area, and even more of them were visible now than previously. We decided to try a stomach flush (gastric lavage).



A huge clump of plant material was flushed (it weighed about 2.5 oz.) as well as a couple of other odds and ends! When we dissected the plant clump, we found numerous pieces of glass, plastic and metal. No wonder the bird hadn't felt well!





An x-ray taken right after the procedure shows how much room the clump had occupied in the abdomen. The bird now ate voraciously, and gained weight quickly.



By Dec. 23, there is another gull in with 1269. There is snow on some parts of the cage bottom, but it does not seem to bother either gull.



1269 is in the foreground in the photo to the left, and is jumping in the photo above.

On Dec. 30 a third Herring Gull joins the group; this one had been admitted a few days earlier, having been hit by a car, but only bruised. This third gull is in the foreground below, and is wearing a blue leg band.



Things were looking good, or so we thought . . . but although the other gulls were often on the high perches, we only saw 1269 on the ground.

Over the first week in January, we began to find flight feathers on the ground. With several birds in the habitat, it was hard to tell who they were coming from, but there was only one bird we had not seen in flight. On Jan. 8 we caught him to check his wings, and discovered most of the flight feathers gone. On Jan. 13, Glori got several photos that showed the bird's latest problem.



By contrast, the other gulls (a fourth joined the group on Jan. 7; she wears a green band) were in good feather and flying fine.



By the end of January, the three other gulls had been released. 1269 is not alone, however!



That's a Muscovy (a domestic duck species) on the right and two Mallards in the foreground.

And yes, there is something the matter with the hen Mallard's beak - we'll tell you about her a few slides from now.



Gradually,
1269's missing
flight feathers
regrew.



Feb. 3, Feb. 10,
and March 2.



On March 12, he was flying across the 40' length of the cage. That was release day!



Marc captures him, and places him in a box for transport to the coast.



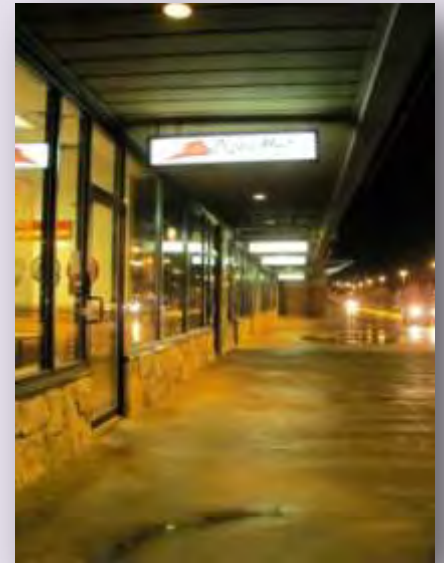
Photos by Terry Heitz



After a short stroll on a lawn, he takes off toward the water.

Now back to the hen Mallard! We hadn't planned to tell her story here, having featured Mallards in our Winter/Spring 2011 Slide Show. But as the tale unfolded, it became too interesting to simply leave in our case files.

She had been seen around the Portland Hannaford's store in late December and early January. Many customers saw her and were concerned about her injured beak. She was very well fed: many people gave her bread purchased at the store! But in the snow of the first week of January, she did look pathetic.



Photos by Kathy Stager

Volunteer transporter Diane Davison tried several times to capture her, as did Kathy and David Stager. But she could fly, and repeatedly eluded her would-be rescuers. Finally on the evening of Jan. 7, Kathy and David succeeded, and promptly named her "Hannah." We got her the next day.



The injury to the beak was at least several months old, but the bird had obviously done well regardless. Basic blood work looked good, and she was nice and plump. Her feet had some sores, possibly from walking on salted surfaces. We kept her inside for two weeks while they healed. And during that time period, we couldn't help but notice that she had no trouble feeding herself!



One of the folks who'd been aware of the Mallard's presence mentioned to our volunteers that the bird had been captured previously and taken to a rehabilitator in Bridgton. If that report was correct, the person had to have been our friend and colleague Kappy Sprenger. Diane called Kappy to check.

Photo by Nora Bryant



The story was true! A warden had captured the bird at the Hannaford's on Dec. 26 and brought her to Kappy. Our colleague had also observed the bird to be in fine shape, and suspected her of being the same bird reported as a duckling the previous summer.

The bird was restless and active. Kappy released her on Dec. 29 at a nearby spot with open water and other Mallards. She saw the hen there later that day and also the next, but on the third day, she was gone. Dec. 31 was the day we got our first call about her. She'd obviously flown straight back to Hannaford's!

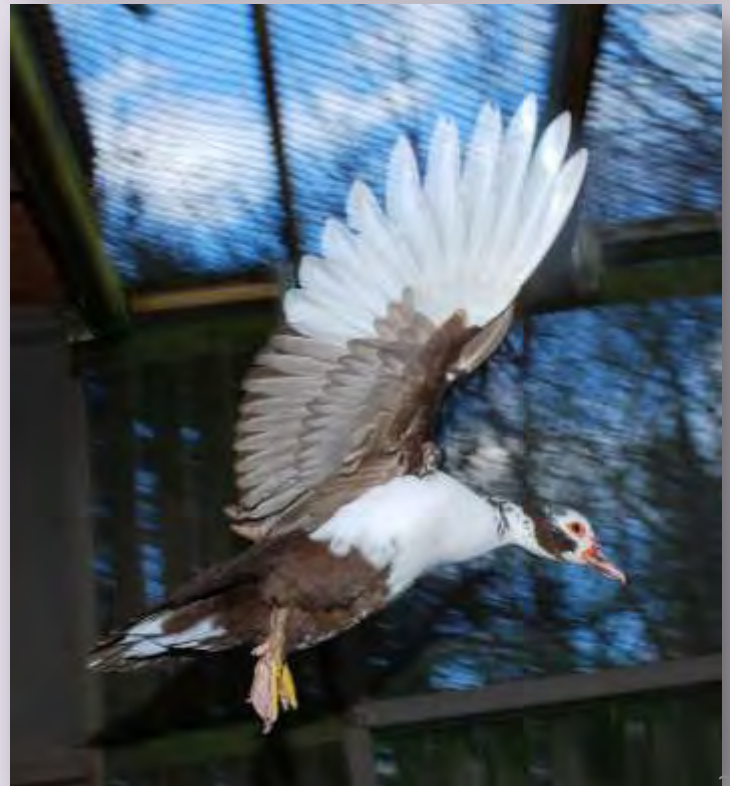
We moved Hannah outside on Jan. 23, along with a drake (male) Mallard we'd admitted a week earlier with a foot injury.



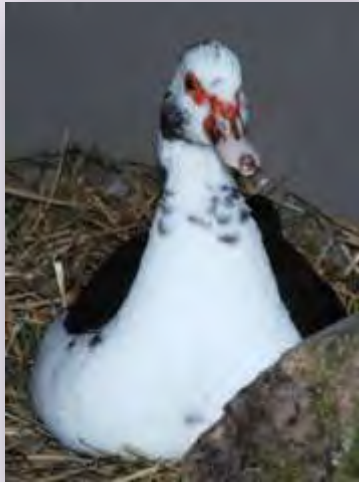
They liked each other right away.







March 2: Everyone is still doing fine.





When the weather was warm enough for open water, we filled a pool in the habitat. Here are the Mallards on April 4.



Photos:
DW

So what happened to all the ducks?

The Muscovy went to a new home with Jerry, a volunteer and friend who already had a male Muscovy that was brought to us in 2011 (photo to right). It was love at first sight!



The Mallards were released together on April 13:
Here's Marc capturing them



. . . and taking one last look at Hannah's beak. The tongue has remained healthy through the winter.

They were released together at Sandy Point WMA, a marsh located far, far away from supermarkets or even convenience stores! They bathed, preened, ate (real food!), explored, and finally swam off together until they were out of sight.



Photos by William Nichols

The release seemed to go well . . . but so had the release in December! Would she be tempted to return to a life of urban panhandling? We asked Diane D. to keep an eye out for her at Hannaford's, and crossed our fingers. A week went by, then most of another.

Early in the morning of April 26, William called to say he had seen Hannah near the release site in the company of a drake. There was no way to be sure the male was her friend of the winter, but she was unmistakable. The pair walked around the beach for a bit, then flew off into the marsh.



Photo by William Nichols





We'll never know why she returned to Portland for New Year's, or why she decided to stay at Sandy Point in April. Features of both locations per se seemed comparable, but maybe springtime plus the presence of a familiar companion made a difference for her. At any rate, she was obviously doing well two weeks after release, and we call that good enough!

Photos by William Nichols

Case # 2012-38

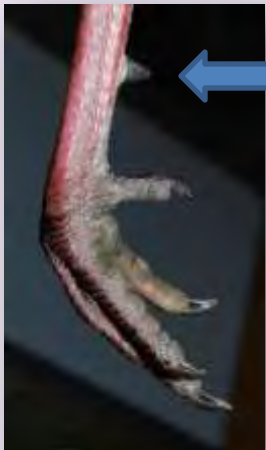


Wild Turkey

Admitted Feb. 24

Distinguishing Characteristics

The largest upland game bird in North America, adult males ("toms" or "gobblers") typically weigh 10-20 lbs. Toms are distinguished from hens by size, and by the "spurs" on their legs. Toms also have "beards," clumps of bristle-like feathers protruding from the chest (though a few females have beards), and fleshy protuberances on the face known as "snoods." Their heads are mostly bare and bluish, but with pink and red highlights. Iridescent patches of red, gold, blue and other hues appear on brownish body feathers.



Natural History

(for more detail, see http://maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/wild_turkey)

Foods comprise a wide variety that includes insects as well as plants, including greens, berries, grains, nuts, and seeds. Preferred habitat is mature hardwoods, but nests are made in fields and pastures.

Toms may mate with several hens, who make their nests on the ground and typically lay 10-12 eggs. Young turkeys ("poults") hatch after roughly a month of incubation.

Wild turkeys were plentiful in southern Maine until the early 1800s, when they were extirpated due to loss of habitat and unrestricted hunting. But many farms were abandoned after the late 1800s, and the eventual reversion of farmlands to woodlands provided the needed habitat. Reintroduction efforts began in the mid 1900s and continued through the late 1980s. The first turkey hunting season opened in York County in 1986. Over the next 10 years, the hunting zone was expanded. There are currently two hunting seasons, spring and fall. In 2010, about 7,200 wild turkeys were taken in the two seasons combined.

Case History and Notes

This individual, a tom, was the survivor of an assumed bow-and-arrow hunting attempt. He was observed on property in Mattawamkeag with an arrow penetrating his body for several weeks before capture by MDIFW biologists Allen Starr and Mark Caron, who had used a net gun. Quite a length of arrow protruded from the lower body, yet the bird had been able to both fly and run.



Photos by Allen Starr



After the bird had been captured, Allen and Mark cut the long length of arrow in order to fit the bird comfortably into a transport box. Allen met volunteer transporter Laura Teisl in Bangor, and Laura brought the bird the rest of the way.

He arrived in a turkey box!





To minimize discomfort and stress, the turkey is placed under general anesthesia. Then a more thorough exam is done.

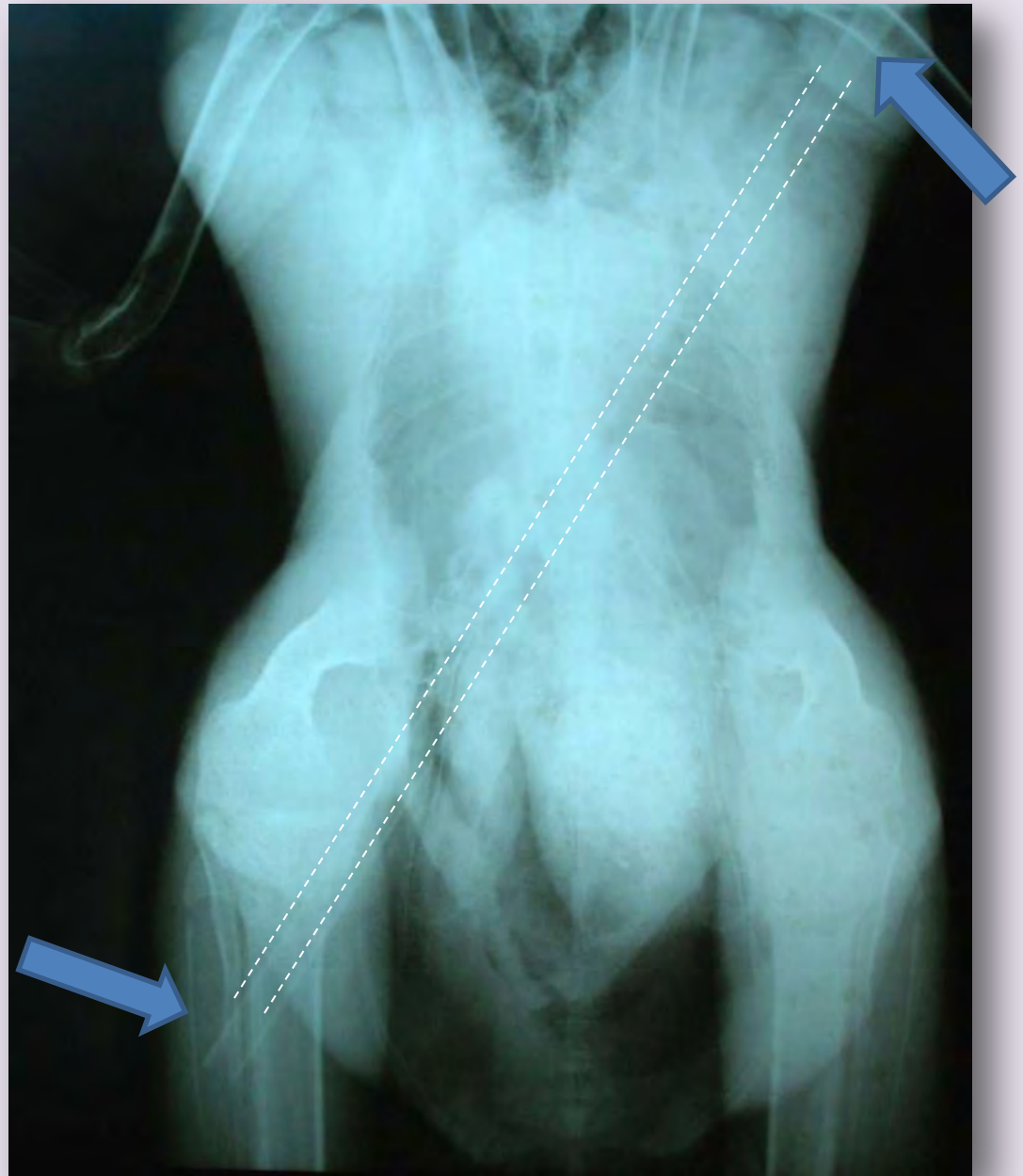
Here's where the arrow entered the body -
you can see its fletching and nock.



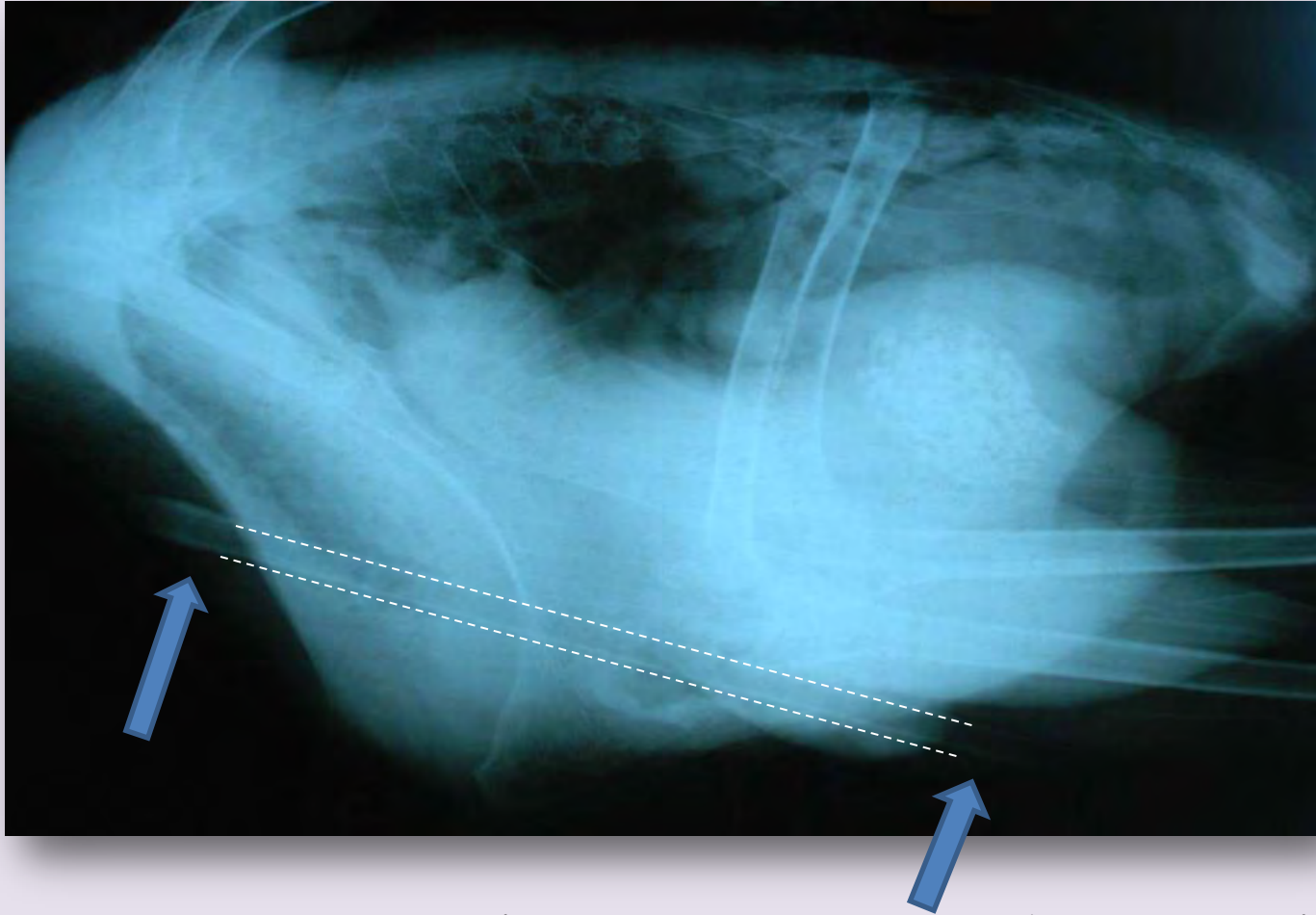
And here's where it exited the body (remember, the biologists had already cut the long protruding length).



Before we attempt removal of the arrow, we want to get an idea of its path through the body. The arrow appears to be made of aluminum; it is not very dense, so does not show up well on the x-ray. It can be seen most clearly near the entrance and exit. We've added dotted lines showing the length of the arrow.



A second x-ray taken in a lateral position shows the arrow's path through the bird's chest.



No bone or organ obstacles appear to be in the way; it looks like the arrow can be pulled without risking further injury.

Before pulling the arrow, the part that will pass through the body is cleaned with an iodine-based antiseptic.

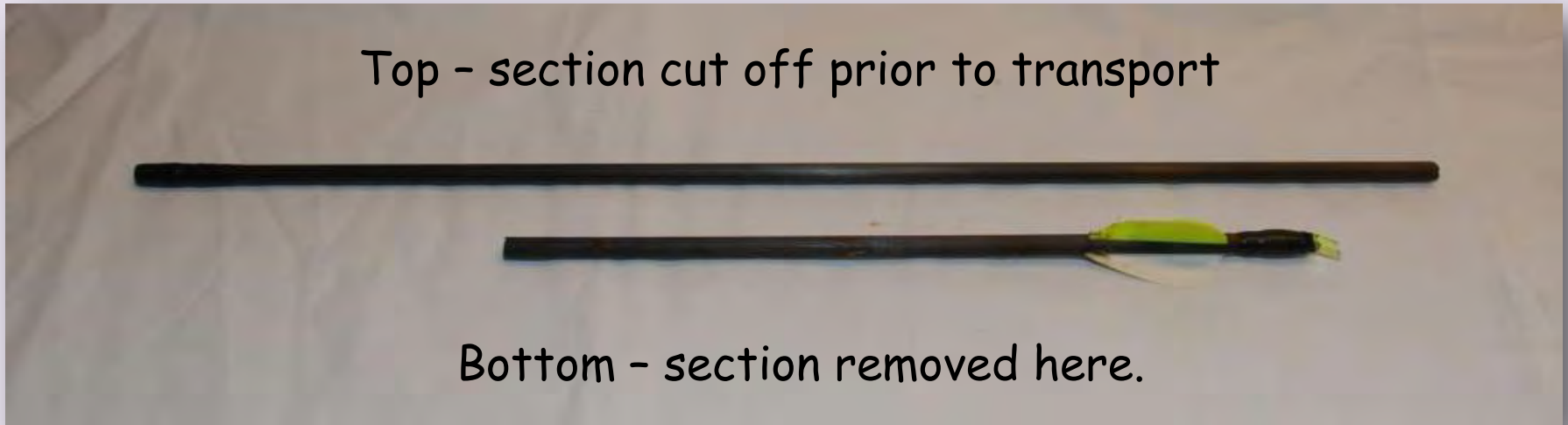




Marc removes it.



The Two Pieces



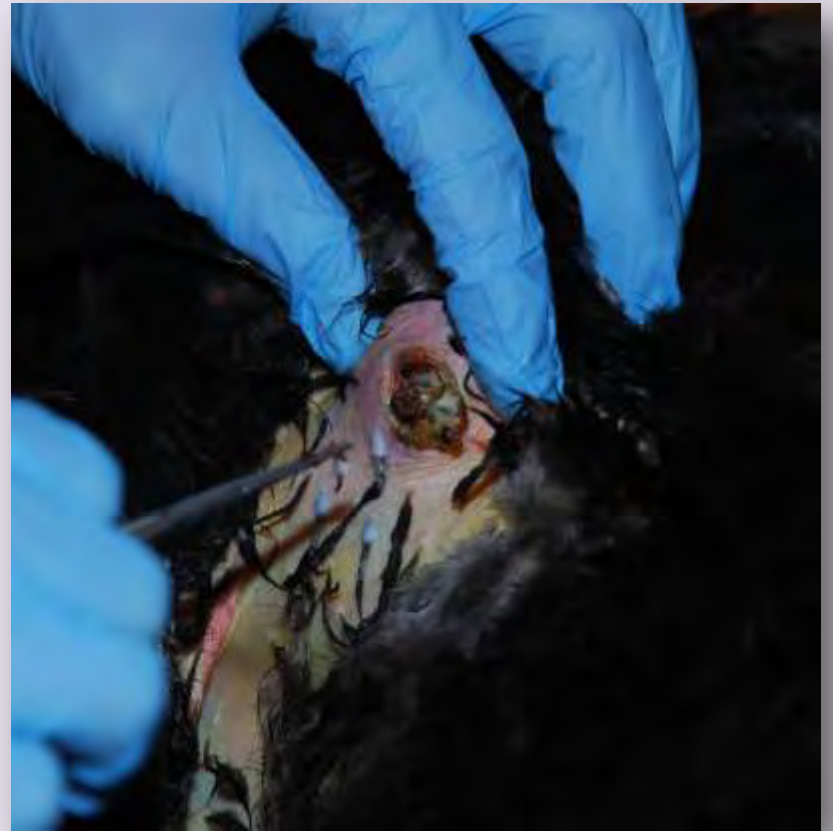
The piece we removed is about 6" long.

Entrance Wound



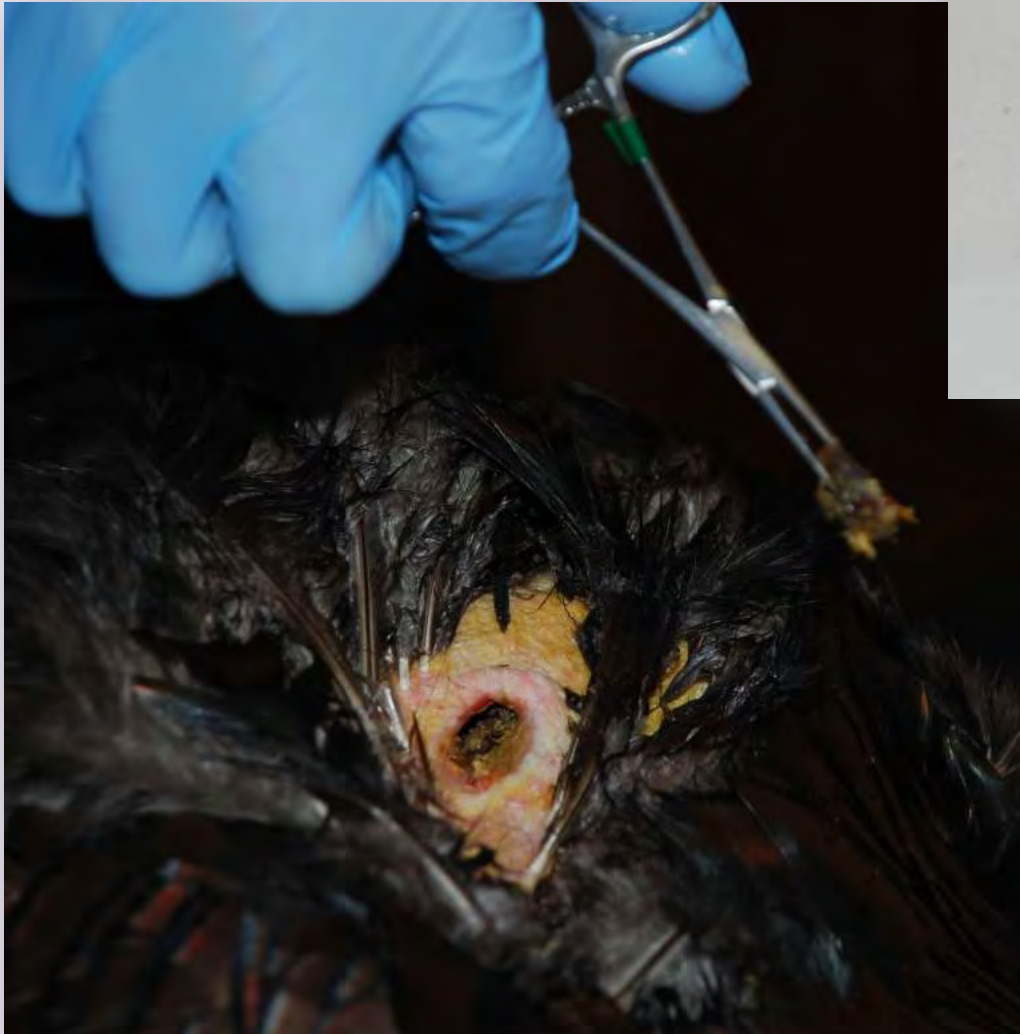
Exit Wound





Shelley cleans the wounds, and begins to pull debris from under the surrounding skin.





A large plug of
walled-off tissue
is removed.



The "tunnel" left by the arrow through the body is flushed with sterile saline.





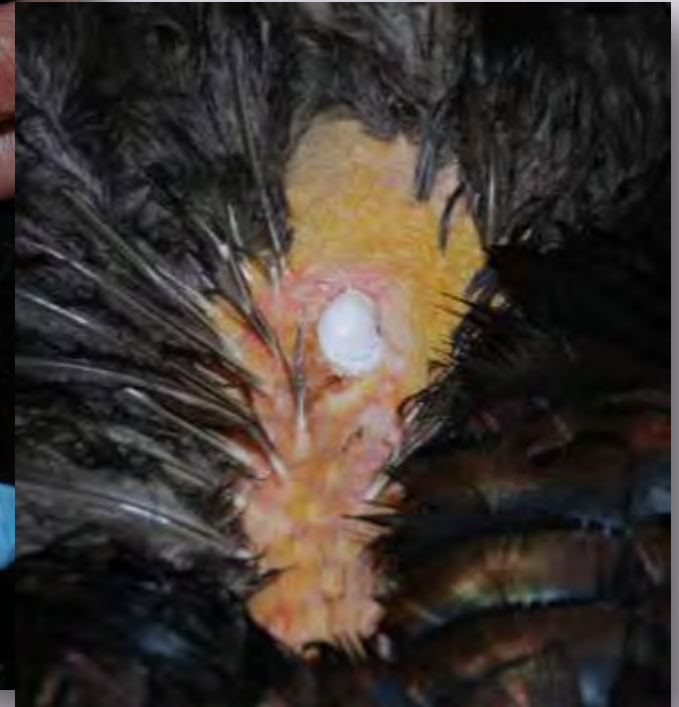
A cotton swab is attached to a pair of forceps. After dipping in antiseptic solution, the swab is threaded through the tunnel and appears at the other end.



After several rounds of swabbing, an antiseptic cream is injected at the top end . . .



. . . and appears at the bottom end.



Finally, both
wounds are
bandaged.



He is soon awake from the procedure.



The bird remained inside for a few days. On Feb. 27, again under anesthesia, the wounds were cleaned. It was no longer possible to insert a swab all the way through the body; the middle section had closed up. More necrotic tissue was removed from around the lower wound, and both open sections were flushed and filled with antiseptic. By the next day, the bird was extremely restless indoors, and was moved to an outside cage.



He flies just fine.



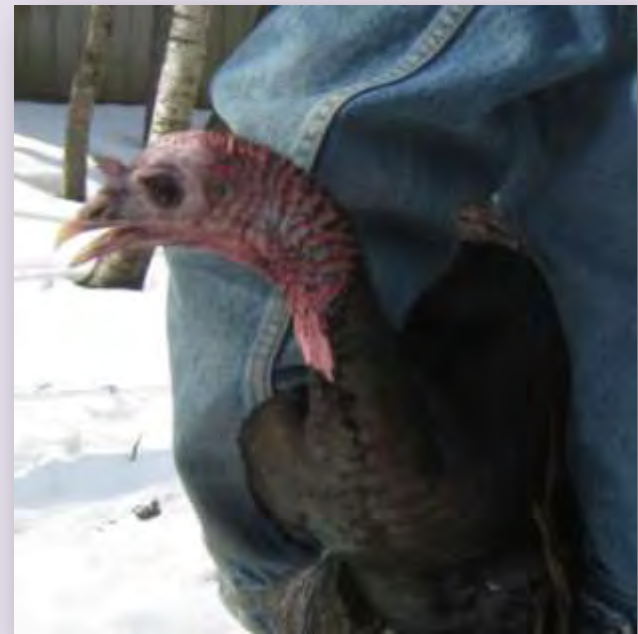
March 8 was release day. The wounds had closed up nicely, and the biologists who had captured the bird will release him at the recovery site. Laura will drive the bird from here to Bangor, where she will meet Allen.



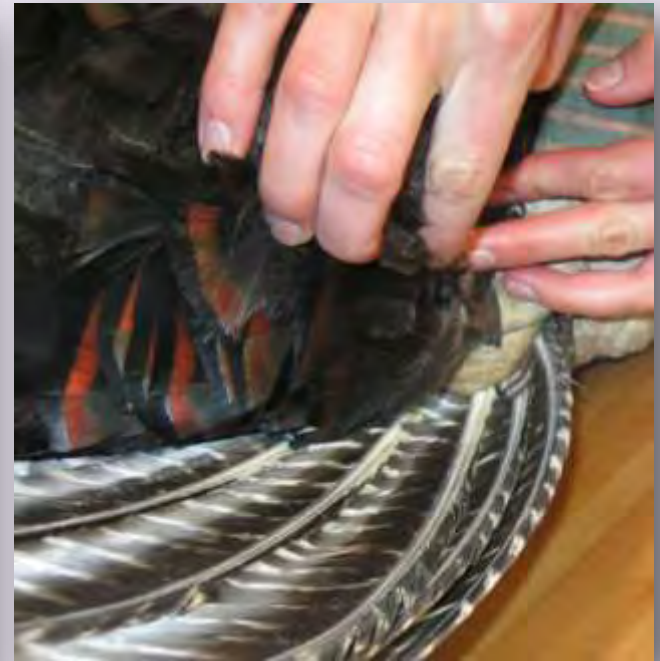
The bird is hiding behind a section of stockade fencing; Marc approaches with a net.



Photos:
DW



Photos:
DW



The wounds
are checked one
last time. They
look fine!



Photos:
DW



Back on home turf, Allen removes the bird from the box for release. Six other turkeys were seen in the area, close enough for our bird to easily find them.



Photos by Mark Caron

Case # 2012-35



Bald Eagle

Admitted Feb. 20

Species Profile

Mature Bald Eagles are strikingly familiar, with a white head and tail, yellow bill and yellow legs contrasting with an overall brown body. Immature birds are brown with white blotches and dark brown/black bills. It takes 4-5 years for a juvenile to attain the classic adult plumage.

With a wingspan of 6-7 feet and a weight from 9-10 pounds, they are the largest raptor species currently breeding in Maine.

Bald eagles are long lived (up to 20 years); nesting females lay 1-3 eggs each spring.

Nests tend to be near water, whether coastal or inland lakes and rivers. Fish is the primary food, though eagles will also take birds such as ducks and gulls. Especially in the winter, they will feed on large mammal carcasses.

Bald Eagles were nearly extirpated in the Northeast due to environmental pesticides such as DDT, which reduced reproductive success by thinning egg shells. Only about 30 breeding pairs remained in Maine when DDT was banned in the early 1970s. Bald Eagles were listed as an Endangered species in Maine as well as 42 other states in 1978. Thanks to a variety of measures, including winter feeding programs and conservation of nesting sites, the species recovered.

Bald Eagles were removed from the federal Endangered list in 2007, but remained listed as Threatened in Maine until 2009, when the species was delisted. As of 2011, it was estimated that there were more than 600 pairs of breeding eagles in Maine. The species continues to be protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Ongoing concerns include the state's carrying capacity for nesting eagles. Availability of food and nesting sites may set limits; territorial disputes are reflected in eagle combat, which may become increasingly frequent.

Case Notes and History

The call came in on President's Day. Two Bald Eagles had been seen in aerial combat, spiraling with locked talons. One was driven down, falling through branches of a tall maple before hitting the ground on Bangor Street in Brewer. On-the-scene observers had the bird cornered near a chain link fence, but were not equipped for a capture. The bird was standing and alert, though obviously injured. No Game Wardens were close enough to get to the scene quickly.

But it being a holiday, Maine's eagle biologist, Charlie Todd, was at home and not far from Brewer. When he arrived on the scene he could see blood on the feet and legs; the bird gave some strong full wing flaps before he could restrain her. But he was able to get her into a box for transport, and headed our way.

Feb. 20



Photos through Slide 73: DW



The very swollen left foot (above) had multiple puncture wounds from the talons of the other bird. The right foot had a few punctures, but there was also an odd-looking growth on the bottom of the foot (see next slide).



The talon of the rear toe (called the "hallux") had penetrated the mass. It was very difficult to bend the hallux back even far enough to clean the foot.





The wounds on the left foot were cleaned, dressed with antiseptic, and bandaged.

Then we returned our attention to the right foot.

Marc is holding the bird. It takes all of Charlie's strength to bend the hallux back far enough for Shelley to get a padded bandage between the mass and the talon.





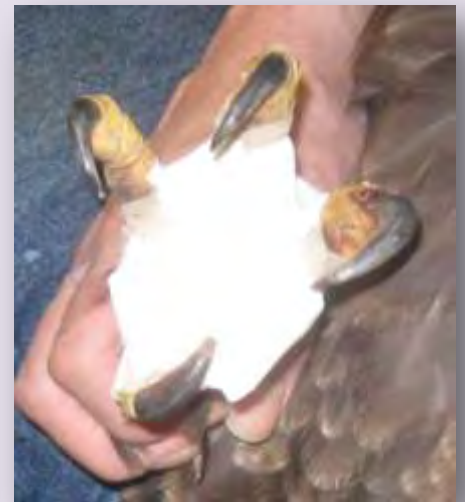
The next morning, we removed the bandages.

The punctures on the left foot are scrubbed with disinfectant and rinsed, then re-bandaged.





We take a closer look at the mass on the right foot. It is not seeping and does not feel hot. We don't know what it is, but do know we have to keep the talon out of it. Shelley has fashioned a "donut" to surround the mass, and put a barrier between it and the talon.



Still groggy from anesthesia, the bird rests in Marc's arms, her feet newly bandaged.





We have taken an x-ray of the feet; some unusual densities are present in the vicinity of the mass. Were we seeing a bone infection? We e-mailed photos of the x-rays and the foot mass to Dr. Pokras at Tufts.

Dr. Pokras in turn sent them to a radiologist colleague for a second opinion. The reaction was judged to look like inflamed connective tissue possibly accompanied by some additional bone growth. By now, we were all in agreement that the mass is not an abscess, but some kind of soft tissue growth.

But what caused that growth? Here's a scenario that seemed plausible: At some point the bird sustained an injury to the hallux, which was folded under the foot (perhaps the tendon that extends the toe back was damaged). Then over time, the irritation of the talon digging into the footpad led to the growth of the mass.



On Feb. 28, we changed the bandage again, but we could not secure the hallux in its proper position. A barrier keeping the talon out of the mass is not a permanent solution.

We wondered if we would have to consider amputation of the talon. But Dr. Erica Miller at Tri-State Bird Rescue suggested something to try first: with the bird under anesthesia, and extra pain meds on board, "really crank" on the hallux, and see if we can make it give way.



March 1: We follow Dr. Miller's suggestion, and over several minutes of effort (note the white knuckles!) manage to get the hallux into position. There were no sudden pops or gives; it feels like a hard stretch, but not a rupture.





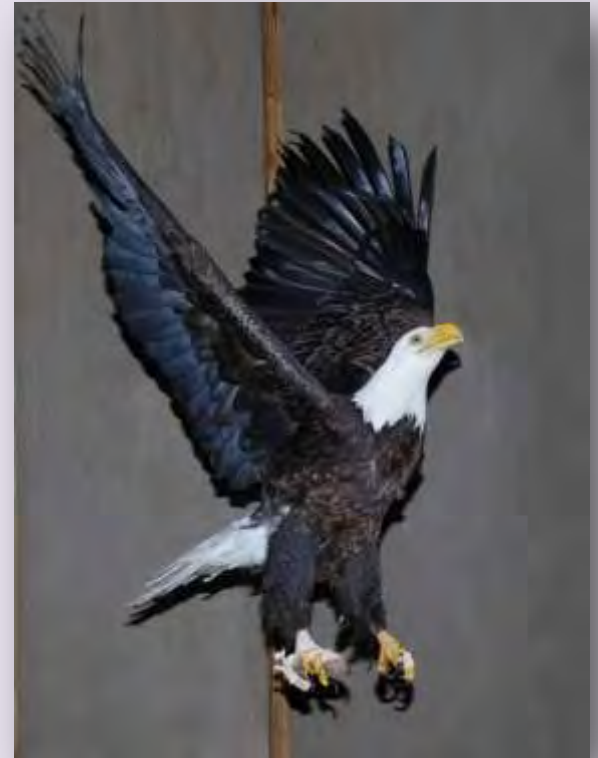
We are VERY pleased to see that the mass appears to be drying up with no intervention other than removing the irritant of the talon. To keep the hallux in position, Shelley fashions a SAM splint that is braced against the talons of the hallux and one of the front toes.



March 2: It's time to put the bird outdoors. As Marc gathers her up, Glori can't resist an opportunity for a close up photo of the eagle's open mouth and tongue.



March 2, cont'd. The bird has gone into a 40-foot flight cage. Her flight is just fine!



March 9 brings more stretching.
The mass seems a little smaller
than a week earlier.



We need a stronger splint, and decide to try a double-layer combination of SAM splint and thumb splint.

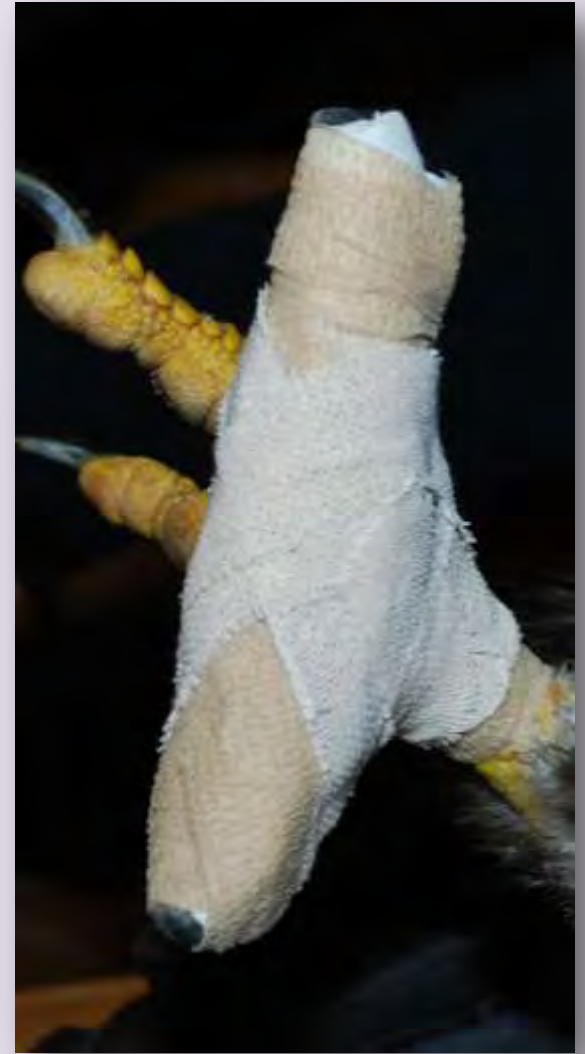


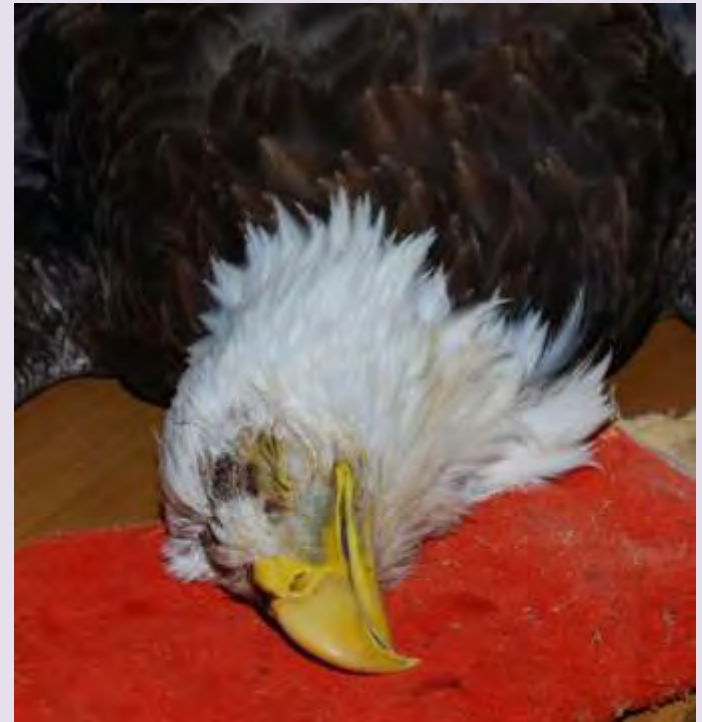
After the new splint is secure, the bird is moved into a larger area - the oval flyway of our large raptor compound.

March 16: the combination splint held up, and the mass has continued to shrink.



Today, the hallux is looser than ever before. We want to keep a splint on for at least one more week, and go for a repeat of the SAM-Thumb Splint combination.

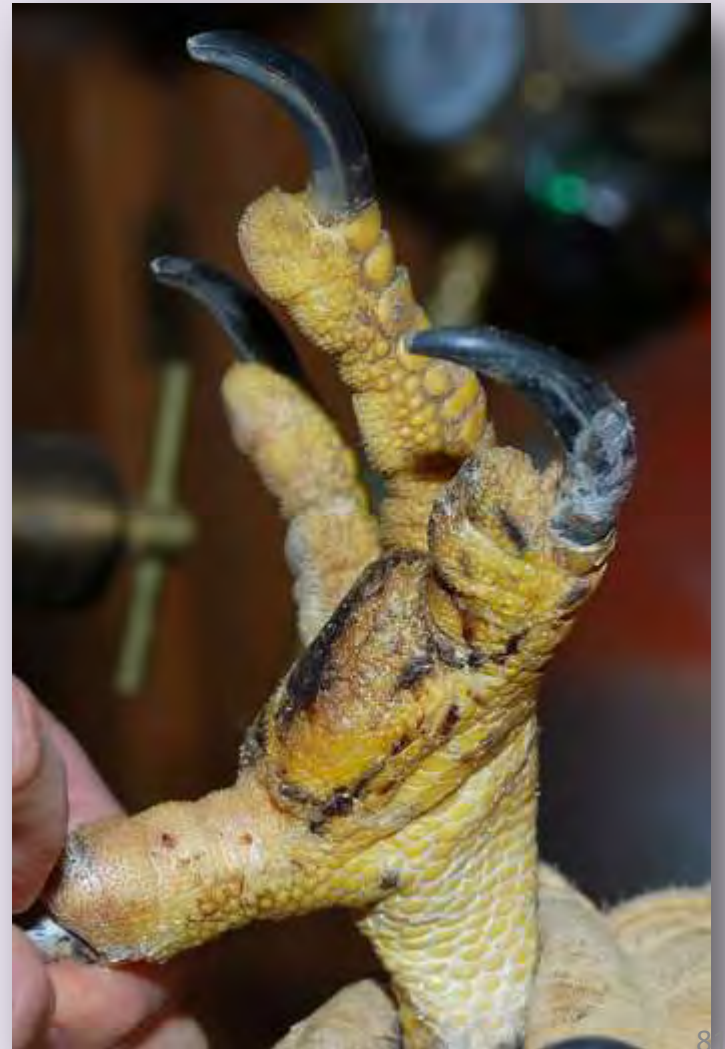




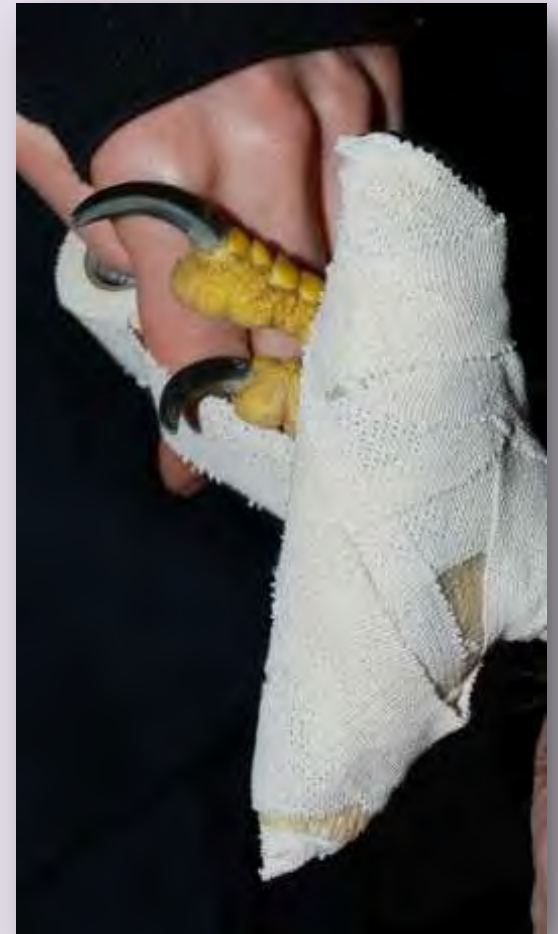
But although the foot has continued to improve, the bird has not been happy in the flyway. On a couple of occasions, we have seen her clinging to the chain-link covering the skylights, and she has abraded her face. Before she wakes up from the anesthesia, we examine the scrapes; they are messy-looking but superficial. We decide to move her to the eagle habitat, where she can have the company of two other eagles.



March 26: The splint combination is removed, and once again, we are delighted to see that the mass is continuing to shrink.



After some more stretching, the splint combo is reapplied. The hallux is looser than ever before, but the puncture on the mass needs a little more healing time; and we decide to go one more round with the splint.





March 26, cont'd. The really good news is that she has relaxed in the company of the other birds.



Her face scrapes are healing, and she continues to fly.



On March 29, we got an e-mail from Charlie that had an astonishing attachment. He'd recently met a woman who mentioned having photographed two eagles in Brewer the previous fall. She sent him a photo that he immediately forwarded to us.



Zooming in on the right foot of the lower bird, the mass on the foot and intruding talon can be seen. The date is November 25, 2011.

Photo by Sharon Fiedler

March 30





April 6



We are discontinuing the splint, and using only a soft wrap. The mass is probably as small as it's going to get, but there are still some scabs.





She continues to be active in the habitat.



On April 9 and 12, the hallux was still staying in place. On the 16, the soft wrap was removed from the foot. We checked the foot frequently over the next week, and were pleased to see good use of the foot and proper position of the hallux. But the bird is once again extremely restless, again hanging on the vinyl-coated wire of the skylights as if trying to get out. On April 24, there was a laceration on the hallux, and once again, the bird was returned to the habitat with a bandaged foot.



DW



April 27: The laceration on the hallux is better, but to help protect it, Shelley applies a bandage for human foot corns.



The bird's flight remains strong.





May 11: The hallux has not completely healed, but a good scab has formed, and it seems pointless to keep the bird any longer; she is extremely and increasingly restless in captivity. We've decided to release the bird with a bandage on the hallux, knowing that it will deteriorate and fall off within a week or so.





She is banded, and loaded into a crate for transport to the release site. Her former partner has taken another mate; so as not to risk another fight, she will not be returned to Brewer. And yet, Charlie does want her to return in the Penobscot River corridor. On his recommendation, we have arranged for release on a river property about 25 miles north of Brewer.

The crate is
opened . . .

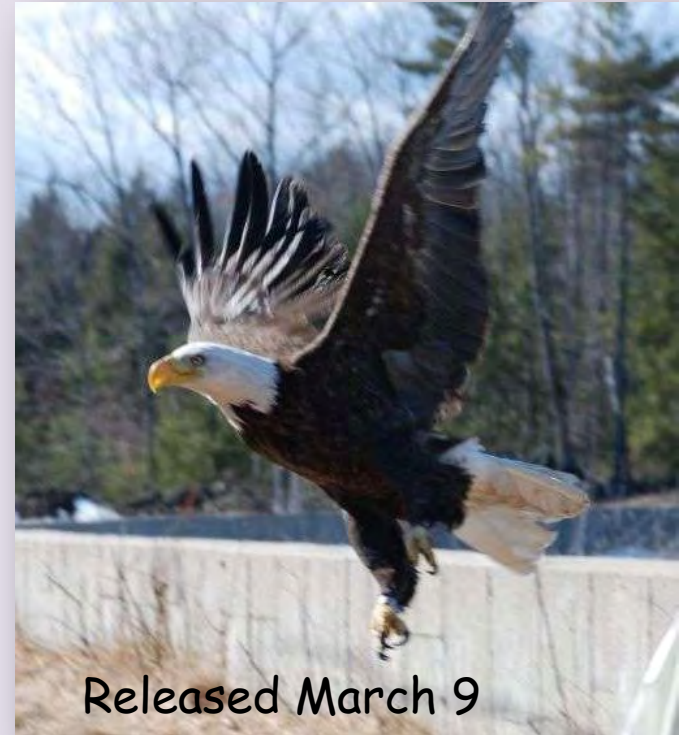


Release photos by Terry Heitz

... and
she's on
her way!



This bird was not the only Bald Eagle rehabilitated here this spring . . .



. . . but theirs are other stories. 😊



That's it
for this
issue!

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our operating expenses are funded by
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Thank you!